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ABSTRACT

Mentor teachers have an important role in inducing beginning teachers into the profession. They must be highly accepting of new teachers and be able to work with teachers possessing a wide variety of personalities and purposes. Mentor teachers must be chosen carefully. The mentor teacher should be highly knowledgeable about methods of teaching that might be used to provide for individual differences among pupils. A mentor teacher is able to use diverse philosophies of teaching to guide learners to attain more optimally. They also need to have a working knowledge of different psychologies of teaching and learning. Mentor teachers should be able to allay the fears of beginning teachers by offering necessary guidance in the solving of problems pertaining to teaching. Quality beginning teachers need to experience growth, development, promise, and encouragement to teach pupils to attain as much as possible. (Contains 13 references.) (RS)

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MENTOR TEACHERS IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Mentor teachers have an important role in inducting beginning teachers into the profession. They need to be chosen carefully. A beginning teacher with high prospects for teaching may fail due to a lack of assistance from a quality mentor teacher. Mentoring then has a necessary and useful function. Mentors need to take their responsibilities wholeheartedly. They must possess good physical and mental health so that adequate time may be given to guide the new teacher into doing a good job of teaching.

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Qualities of Mentors

Mentor teachers must be highly accepting of new teachers. They need to be able to work with teachers possessing a wide variety of personalities and purposes. These mentors understand the concept of culture and realize its relevance for and in working with other people. Mentors who are aware of the concept of culture realize that people may differ from each other in many ways. And yet, the mentor is able to work harmoniously with beginning teachers regardless of personal beliefs held by the latter. Thus a good working relationship is a must in guiding the new teacher in truly becoming a professional teacher.

Careful Selection of Mentors

Mentor teaches must be chosen carefully. Much thought needs to be given by those selecting mentors as to who will meet acceptable criteria for the task. Ganser (1995) wrote the following:

> It is useful to have a pool of mentors in advance of the need. This can prevent an experienced teacher in an awkward position that a mentor described to me. Shortly before the start of the fall semester, he was outside painting his house. seeing him, the principal stopped his cat and asked, "Could you be a mentor for a new teacher? I really need someone." The teacher felt obligated to say yes even though he did not fully understand the responsibilities and time commitment involved in serving as a mentor. If a pool of prospective mentors is established, picking out a mentor to work with a beginner is greatly facilitated.

Before acceptance, the prospective mentor should have ample time

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to study and learn about the role of being a mentor. Otherwise, a prospective mentor has little or no time to become highly knowledgeable about mentorship responsibilities. A mentor must have demonstrated quality teaching skills and abilities prior to being chosen for the task. He/she needs to demonstrate quality human relationship abilities in order to work well well with others. Without good human relations, a mentor teacher cannot be effective.

Methods of Teaching

The mentor should be highly knowledgeable about methods of teaching that might be used to provide for individual differences among pupils. Reinforcement theory of learning has received much attention in the educational literature. With reinforcement, the teacher rewards pupils who do well on a specific activity. Thus verbal praise or physical prizes may be given pupils who achieve well on a given task. The writer recommends physical prizes be given only in situations where pupils are not able to achieve otherwise. The ideal is to have pupils attain intrinsically due to an inward desire to learn. However, reinforcement theory is an acceptable way of having pupils learn.

Pupils being involved in choosing what to learn with teacher guidance has also received much acclaim in education. These advocates believe that pupils have inward interests and needs that should become a part of the curriculum. Teacher- pupil planning of objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation techniques are important where learner input into the curriculum is desired.

Mentors need to be thoroughly familiar with different psychologies of learning such as using behaviorally stated objectives, cooperative learning, quality scope and sequence (logical and psychological sequence) in the curriculum, humanism as a psychology of teaching, multimedia approaches of instruction, and emphasis place upon diverse styles of learning for pupils.

Knowledgeable About Philosophies of Teaching

A mentor teacher is able to use diverse philosophies of teaching to guide learners to attain more optimally. There must be something that provides direction for the mentor teacher in decision making and that something may be acceptable philosophies of instruction. The mentor teacher then needs to guide the beginning teacher to stress a problem solving approach in teaching. Thus a beginning teacher is assisted by the mentor in aiding pupils to identify relevant problems, gather data, develop hypotheses, as well as evaluate each hypothesis.

In addition to problem solving, the mentor is able to guide the new teacher in using a subject centered philosophy of teaching. Vital subject matter to be taught is chosen for pupil acquisition. The subject matter has values in and of itself. Cognitive objectives pervade when subject matter is taught to learners. Vital facts, concepts, and generalizations need to be taught by beginning teachers to pupils.

Third, decision making skills need to be emphasized by the mentor and the beginning teacher. Here it is salient for the pupil with teacher guidance to plan objectives, learning opportunities, and evaluation procedures. Individual as well as group endeavors may be chosen to participate in as indicated by pupil choice with teacher guidance.

A fourth philosophy of teaching stresses the mentor and beginning teacher understanding and implementing predetermined objectives in measurable terms for pupil achievement. The teacher then chooses learning opportunities for pupils so that objectives may be attained. This is followed by the teacher appraising the pupil to see if the objectives(s) have been attained.

A chosen mentor teacher then must be highly knowledgeable of diverse philosophies of teaching so that pupils individually may achieve as much as possible.

There are selected principles of learning from the psychology of learning which mentor teachers need to model and implement. These agreed upon principles from educational psychology might well provide a broad framework for beginning teachers to emulate. These are the following which pupils should experience in the classroom:

1. meaningful lessons and units of study. With meaning, pupils

understand and comprehend that which was contained in ongoing learning opportunities.

2. interesting content and skills in the curriculum. With interest, the pupil and the curriculum, become one, not separate entities. Pupils attend from ongoing lessons and units of study.

3. purpose in learning. With purpose for learning, pupils accept reasons for achieving relevant facts, concepts, and generalizations presented. Purpose developed by the teacher may take little time indeed. With deduction, the teacher explains clearly and concisely why pupils should achieve the objectives to be stressed. With inductive approaches, the teacher raises a few questions about the new lesson whereby the pupil responds and and perceives purpose and reasons for achieving. Extrinsic rewards can be emphasized. Here, the teacher announces prizes and awards that pupils can secure if they attain the objectives of the lesson. Pupils need to know precisely what is to be learned to obtain the rewards.

4. Sequence in learning. With quality sequence, pupils relate newly acquired content with that previously achieved. Pupils need guidance to to perceive relationship of knowledge in teaching- learning situations.

5. balance among objectives stressed. Thus knowledge, skills, and attitudes — three kinds of objectives need to be achieved by students. These objectives interact and are not in isolation from each other. For example, if pupils possess positive attitudes, they should achieve needed knowledge and skills more readily (Ediger, 1994).

Mentor teachers need to possess knowledge and skills pertaining to assisting all pupils to achieve well. Hilliard (1991) advocates that public schools involve parents in the educational process. Parents should be involved pertaining to decisions about the curriculum and about school policy. Teachers should be involved in ongoing inservice educational programs. The curriculum needs to be sensitive to different cultures and appropriate for the pupil's stage of development. Health and safety standards need to be emphasized. Administrators in schools should monitor the school environment to assist each pupil to achieve optimally. A variety of assessment procedures need to be used to appraise the effectiveness of the school. Mentor teachers then have a variety of responsibilities to mentees in the school and classroom setting. Schools are a part of the larger society and need to become integrated, not separate entities.

Huling- Austin (1990) advocates that mentors have enthusiasm for serving and desiring to assist new teachers in developing the latters capabilities. Hopefully the enthusiasm will reflect within the mentee in becoming a quality teacher of pupils. Mentors should fulfill necessary roles in achieving objectives of the mentoring program. They need to be creative individuals who discover new ways of meeting role responsibilities. Mentors should have an inward desire to improve the mentoring process. These mentors are able to work effectively with others in the educational arena. Mentors should have a planned program of inservice education to improve their own personal skills and abilities. Positive attitudes toward others in interpersonal relations are musts. Furtwengler (1993) emphasizes the importance of having quality mentor services so that beginning teachers may develop well professionally. A school system should not wait to provide inservice education and professional assistance to teachers, but provide guidance as soon as the new teacher enters school in teaching pupils.

Ganser (1995) lists background experiences that potential mentors should possess. These background experiences might well provide assistance in choosing mentors who have had quality teaching experiences. Letters of nomination, written statements about beliefs pertaining to teaching, induction activities, vitae, portfolios, videotapes of actual teaching, and interviews provide additional information pertaining to securing perspective mentors. Mentors need to be chosen carefully in terms of desired criteria. They are able to work well with new teachers and can provide assistance in guiding the latter in becoming true professionals in the area of teaching. Mentors must be willing to guide and assist new teachers to achieve optimally and well. There must be commitment to truly help new teachers to attain as optimally as possible.

Mentor Teachers and Theories of Learning

Mentor teachers need to have a working knowledge of different psychologies of teaching and learning. Decisions in the classroom should be based on theory. These theories need to be carefully and

thoroughly understood so that effective implementation may be an end result. Which theories should be emphasized in teaching and learning?

B. F. Skinner (1979) and his emphasis upon behaviorism has strong support among numerous educators. He stressed the use of predetermined measurably stated objectives to be achieved by students. Each objective is precisely written so that teachers may measure if a pupil has or has not attained any single objective of instruction. If learners respond correctly, Skinner advocated reinforcing correct responses with physical prizes or verbal praise. The behaviorally stated objectives movement follows the thinking of Dr. Skinner. The teacher then uses predetermined objectives and announces prior to instruction that which pupils are to attain. Learners are certain as to what to achieve as a result of teaching. Following instruction, pupils reveal what has been learned that was stated inside each behaviorally stated objective.

Piaget (1958) in his research pertaining to studying pupils for over fifty years in Geneva, Switzerland advocated a theory of maturation in teaching pupils. The first stage is called the sensorimotor stage of pupil development and covers birth to two years of age for the young child. The preoperational stage covers ages two to seven whereas the stage of concrete operation covers the ages of seven to eleven. Beyond eleven years of age, Piaget emphasized that pupils were in the stage of formal operations. Each stage of pupil development has selected implications for teaching pupils.

Ausubel (1978) in his cognitive theory of pupil development emphasized that the single most salient factor in teaching is to have the teacher start at the entry level of the pupil that he/she is presently at. Each pupil then is ready for new content to be learned which is different from other learners.

Gagne' (1977) emphasized that objectives be arranged hierarchically from simple to increasingly more complex when writing and implementing sequential objectives of instruction. Thus at any stage in teaching, if a pupil fails to progress to a more complex objective, the teacher can go back to an earlier objective in sequence. This is done

until the pupil is familiar with content being taught by the teacher.

Maslow (1954) offered a theory of motivation based needs of human beings. Generally the following needs must be met in ascending order of complexity:

1. physical needs such as adequate food, clothing, and shelter.
2. safety and security needs in that adequate protection must be there so that pupils can attain well in school.
3. belonging needs should be met so that pupils feel love and affection.
4. esteem needs stress the importance of status and recognition for something well done individually or within a group.
5. self actualization in that a person wishes to become the person desired. Thus the actual as perceived and the ideal become closer together, not separate entities.

The above five named needs are to become increasingly realized before a pupil may understand subject matter thoroughly in ongoing lessons and units of study. Meeting the needs of pupils should help individuals to attain, achieve, and grow in diverse fields of endeavors. Mentors and beginning teachers must know the relevance of meeting needs of pupils so that they may achieve academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. The self actualizing person comes about due to having needs met.

Combs (1972) advocates humanism as a psychology of teaching and learning. Here, the emphasis is upon pupils being involved with teacher guidance in choosing objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal techniques to ascertian progress in learning. Pupil/ teacher planning of the curriculum is salient.

Mentor teachers and beginning teachers need to lean upon diverse theories of learning so that individual differences among learners may be provided for and each might attain as much as possible. Theories of learning are not emphasized for the sake of doing so but rather to provide guidance and direction in selecting ends, means, and appraisal procedures in the school curriculum. Pupils possess different talents and each ability and talent must be developed optimally.

Important Considerations in Mentoring

Klug (1990) emphasizes that mentoring can be placed on a continuum from a loosely structured buddy system to a highly structured approach in which designated mentors give all or part of the school day to assist mentees. Differences also exist in terms of involvement of institutions in the mentoring program.Thus there may be collaborative efforts among districts or individual schools. Collaboration might also occur between schools and universities in providing mentor services Du Bolt (1992). The writer has supervised student and regular teachers for thirty years and has mentored preservice as well as inservice teachers. When student teachers being supervised have been in one school building or a nearby building, these preservice teachers were involved in being a community of learners in which they shared experiences and assisted each other in developing quality lessons and units of study. Cooperative endeavors here stressed a mentoring approach. When problems arose in teaching, there was assistance, not only from the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor of student teachers, but also from peers. Crowe (1995), in an essay on mentoring, wrote pertaining to his beginning days as a high school English teacher. His first three days had been a disaster as no one had assisted him in beginning when starting in the middle of the school year upon graduation from college. At the end of the third day, an experienced teacher in the building talked to him and gave assistance. This person who was not designated as a mentor saved him from dropping out of teaching. Crowe (1995) wrote the following pertaining to his first days of teaching while talking to the undesignated mentor:

> It wasn't going I told him. I had no idea how to make sense of the fragmented, unrecorded mess. Students didn't respect me. Nothing and no one worked in class. I wasn't even sure which textbooks I should be using. On and on I rambled, listing the injustices, cataloging the student atrocities, pouring out the frustrations and insecurities of a rattled, able- brained new teacher.... Beck (the experienced teacher) had been teaching for only three years, but from my perspective, he spoke with the ease and wisdom of a veteran. Even more importantly, he understood, he cared, and he shared. By the time he left my area

that afternoon, I felt encouraged and enabled. I knew I could do better, and finally, I had some idea how to go about it.

What I didn't know at the time, and I suppose Beck didn't either was that I needed a mentor, someone more experienced than I who would listen, answer questions, offer support, and give advice. Steve Beck became my first and most important teacher mentor, and those twenty minutes after school on that hopeless January Wednesday marked a turning point in my career.

From the above incident, it is critical that someone assist the new teacher to secure even the rudiments of information necessary to begin the teaching sequence. Too frequently, beginning teachers enter their first days of teaching with no assistance available. There is no one designated to answer the new teachers questions, nor to help with the bare necessities of starting the professional career of teaching. In other situations, there are designated mentors with time off from teaching who are assigned to the beginning teacher to offer guidance.

Attrition rates, no doubt, can be reduced when quality mentors are available to help in the induction processes of new teachers. Approximately, 40 to 50 per cent of new teachers leave the profession after seven years of teaching Attrition rates are even greater in urban areas (Haberman and Richards, 1990). Mentor teachers should be able to allay the fears of beginning teachers by offering necessary guidance in the solving of problems pertaining to teaching. The affective or feeling dimension of teachers may be quite strong. When the writer began teaching in a rural two teacher elementary school, the following were major areas of concern:

1. the other teacher had considerable status with the three member school board. Her actions and deeds were looked upon as being "right" by both the school board members and parents. The writer was new to the rural community and the feelings were that he was not a part of the teaching team. A caring mentor, even with one other teacher in the school, could have made for a marked difference where cooperation not competition was in evidence.

2. the other teacher sided with pupils continually in the two teacher school. There are rules and regulations, reasonable in nature,

that should apply to pupils so that optimal learning may take place. She alone determined what should be done and was fair/ right for pupils. My decisions pertaining to an appropriate learning environment were to be ignored unless the other teacher agreed with them. Obviously, quality mentoring was not possible here. A mentor needs to be caring and considerate of the new teacher. He/ she needs to assist, help, guide, and direct so that a professional induction into teaching is possible.

In Closing

Why be a mentor? Thompson (1995) wrote the following:

Being a mentor, formally or informally, is an important role for the teacher. If you can name at least one individual who helped pave the road, or at least made it seem smoother, during your bumpy first year of teaching, you had a mentor.

The transition from student teacher to classroom instructor is an ever present challenge. Beginning teachers must learn to adjust to new roles and new relationships in the school environment. In addition, these first year instructors need time to study and analyze their performances in the classroom. As an experienced gatekeeper, consider the opportunity to serve as mentor to one of these new faces in the hallway. Help a beginner learn to enjoy classroom life!

Mentor teachers work in situations involving ambiguity. They do not have measurably stated duties and responsibilities. Thus a mentor must be creative in determining that which will make for an effective role model. There are numerous recommendable philosophies of education. Mentors need to realize that there are diverse acceptable methods of teaching. Within the framework of open endedness and flexibility, the mentor is able to work harmoniously with new teachers in an effective interpersonal manner.

The Kirksville, Missouri R3 School System lists the following goals for The Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (1995):

1. promote the personal and professional well- being of beginning teachers.
2. encourage promising beginning teachers to remain in the profession.
3. promise community awareness for beginning teachers.

4. ease the transition for the first year teacher from student teaching to their career in education.

5. enhance teacher performance and improve service to students.

6. foster a better educational environment by breaking down the isolation of classroom teachers and by promoting cooperation among teachers and between administrators and teachers.

7. encourage recognition that the professional development of teachers is an ongoing educational process.

Quality beginning teachers need to experience growth, development, promise, and encouragement to teach pupils to attain as much as possible. Good mentors have an important responsibility here.

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